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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR
ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL; S/ES-O FOR SECRETARY'S TRAVELING
PARTY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)
SUBJECT: PA SECURITY CHIEFS DISCUSS GAZA CRISIS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. PA security chiefs told PolFSN on January 6 that the security situation in the West Bank remains under control, and that the PA's reputation depends on how the crisis in Gaza is resolved. End summary.

¶2. (C) National Security Forces (NSF) commander MG Thiab al-Ali (Abu al-Fatah) said he is under instruction not to make public statements on the situation in Gaza. Previous comments he has made, to the effect that the PA will not rule out any options for dealing with Gaza, have caused him "headaches," he said. Ali said the IDF operation in Gaza has increased the security burden on NSF forces in the West Bank, but that they have so far been successful "despite incitement by Hamas." He said the Gaza operation will have long-term repercussions for the political process, and that the GOI will have to decide how long "it wants to occupy the West Bank." MG Ali said he is concerned that reports of increased civilian casualties will worsen the political standing of the PA in the West Bank.

¶3. (C) Palestinian Police chief MG Hazim Attallah described police efforts to prevent clashes between IDF soldiers and Palestinians in the West Bank. He said efforts in PA-controlled areas have been largely successful, but flagged Hebron for concern because of its strong Hamas presence and the division of the city into Israeli and Palestinian sections. Attallah acknowledged that efforts to restrain demonstrations have come at significant political cost to the PA, and to President Abbas and PM Fayyad in particular. He said his message to IDF interlocutors is that any weakening of Hamas in Gaza must be accompanied by strengthening the PA in the West Bank. "I told several Israeli generals, including (Gadi) Shamni and (Noam) Tibon, that if they don't stop their incursions in the West Bank, we will run out of justifications to our people."

¶4. (C) Military Intelligence (MI, "Istikhbarat") head Majid al-Farraj said it will be "disastrous" for the PA and Fatah in the West Bank if Hamas survives the IDF operation in Gaza. He outlined Hamas' goals as surviving the strikes, remaining in power, and portraying the PA as collaborators with Israel. Al-Farraj noted that Hamas leaders Khalid Mesh'al and Usama Hamdan have said Hamas will accept an arrangement whereby the PA and Hamas are jointly present at Rafah alongside EU monitors, which al-Farraj assesses as indicating Hamas is open to "realistic" ceasefire proposals. He said Hamas' refusal to meet with President Abbas is an attempt to paint Abbas as irrelevant. Without Israeli efforts to strengthen the PA, either on the political level or on the ground, al-Farraj said the PA will become "politically bankrupt" regardless of the outcome in Gaza.

WALLES